

**LAYAN GAMAGE MRCS FRACS
PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGEON
7 JUNE 1975 – 10 MARCH 2020**

Before coming to New Zealand Layan, who was naturally empathetic, was told that he was unlikely to succeed in surgery. It is true that he didn't conform to the surgical stereotype... because he was so much better. He was gentle, kind, decent and caring, and much loved by his patients and colleagues alike. He worked calmly, with quiet competence and intelligent thoughtfulness, quickly becoming a role model to colleagues. Layan leaves a legacy of having made a most extraordinary impact during his sadly very shortened surgical career.

Layan Gamage was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka to Sarath Gamage, an ENT surgeon, and Hema Abeysinghe, a General Practitioner. He had one older sister, Charmini. Like all medical families they moved around a lot and when Layan was a little boy they relocated to England where his father's surgical rotations took them all over the country. Once his study was complete, the family returned to Colombo for a period when Layan attended Ashoka Junior School. Ultimately, they ended up back in the UK where Layan attended Hulme Grammar Private School. During this time, he learned to play the piano accordion and demonstrated some talent as an artist.

Layan began his medical journey at the University of Leeds in 1993, attaining a BSc (Hons) in Physiological Sciences and his MBChB in 1999. During that period, with a love for travel, he explored extensively throughout Africa and Asia with his medical school friends. Following graduation, he spent his house surgeon year at St James Hospital, Leeds and the Leeds General Infirmary. Layan immediately gained a place in the Yorkshire Deanery Basic Surgical Training Programme. Completing this in 2003 he spent six months working in Johannesburg, returning to the UK to a Senior House Officer position in Orthopaedic surgery at Bristol and Exeter in 2004 and obtaining his MRCS(UK). In 2005 he commenced a SHO/Registrar position in plastic surgery at Pinderfields Hospital in Wakefield, close to Leeds. While working there he met Joanne (Jo) Mahon, a neurological physiotherapist, at a Doctors Mess Party and they hit it off instantly.

Deciding to move to New Zealand in the quest to pursue a career as a Plastic Surgeon, Layan secured a position as a rotating surgical registrar at Christchurch and commenced in December 2007, Jo following the next month. As a consequence of administrative delay in confirming he had permanent residency in New Zealand, his application to gain entry into the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery training programme was delayed a year – Layan accepted this setback graciously and continued to rotate through junior registrar jobs. The following year, 2010, Layan was clearly Christchurch's first choice in the national selection process and his application was successful. He then commenced as a Plastic Surgery Trainee spending two years in Middlemore Hospital, a year at Waikato Hospital and then returning to Christchurch for his final two years. He gained his FRACS in 2016. During this period, in 2012, Layan and Jo married.

His lengthy period of training complete, Layan spent the next year as a locum consultant in Christchurch and then returned to Pinderfields General Hospital with Jo and two young children, Luca (born 2012) and Arlo (born 2015), for a one year Hand Surgery Fellowship. Returning to Christchurch and anticipating gaining an appointment in the Christchurch Plastic Surgery service he commenced in private practice, sharing consulting rooms with Jesse Kenton-Smith. Sadly, within just a year, Layan was found to have aggressive pancreatic cancer and he was unable to continue to practice.

In choosing New Zealand to achieve his dream of becoming a Plastic Surgeon, Layan felt he had made the right choice, achieving a much better work/leisure/family life balance than he believed would have been possible if he had remained in the UK. He loved the feeling of space in New Zealand, the beautiful landscapes and the opportunities to get out into nature, and he proudly called his adoptive country home. Layan enjoyed travel, books, movies and photography - taking some stunning photographs. A keen runner, he participated in many events completing his first half marathon in Hanmer Springs in December 2016. With a thirst for knowledge he was always reading up on new topics that interested him. He loved fast cars and in later years older 4WD's with character.

Sadly, Layan, a kind and skilled surgeon with a passion for teaching, died at the age of 44 years at the threshold of his sought-after career in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, having valiantly fought his battle with cancer. He maintained a positive mindset throughout, and whilst preparing practically if

the worst were to happen, explored every option to change the expected outcome. Studying the book "Reality Unveiled" by Ziad Masri, he found peace through increased knowledge of the Quantum field theory and a deepened appreciation of meditation.

Layan is survived and greatly missed by his parents, Sarath and Hema, sister, Charmini, and particularly his wife, Jo, and children, Luca and Arlo, who were his pride and joy.

This obituary is based upon one prepared for the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgery by Kirk Williams III and Jeremy Simcock FRACS and published in the NZAPS April 2020 Newsletter. Jo Gamage assisted greatly in its preparation.